

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0916

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 CAIRO 3271

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, IS

SUBJECT: TALK WITH SADAT RE NON-BELLIGERENCY CONCEPT

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

SUMMARY: I PRESENTED TO SADAT, MARCH 11, "NON-BELLIGERENCY" CONCEPT. IN DOING SO, I FOLLOWED CLOSELY APPROVED TALKING POINTS. HE LISTENED ATTENTIVELY AND UNDERTOOK TO STUDY THE PROPOSAL. HE WILL CONSULT WITH HIS NSC, AFTER WHICH I WILL BE GIVEN FORMAL REPLY THROUGH FAHMY, PROBABLY EARLY NEXT WEEK. HE ASKED THAT I BRIEF FAHMY, WHICH I HAVE DONE. AMONG SADAT'S PURELY PRELIMINARY MUSINGS ON CONCEPT WERE: (A) CONCERN OVER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PLO; (B) RECENT SYRIAN PUBLIC MEDIA ATTACKS, AS A RESULT OF ISRAELI PUBLICITY, THAT IT IS A US-SADAT CONCOTED SCHEME TO UNDERMINE ARAB RIGHTS; (C) IT IS A HIGH PRICE TO PAY FOR LESS THAN TOTAL WITHDRAWAL AND WILL BE VIEWED AS AN INVITATION TO THE ISRAELIS TO REMAIN IN UNEVACUATED AREAS. SAME TIME, HE APPLAUDED OUR SUCCESS IN GETTING ISRAELIS EVEN TO BE WILLING TO TALK ABOUT WEST BANK CONCESSIONS AND ASSERTED THAT HE WILL LOOK CAREFULLY AT ANYTHING THAT OFFERS PROSPECT OF RECOVERING SOME OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. THINKING OUT LOUD, HE OBSERVED THAT CONCEPT MIGHT BETTER BE TRIED

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OUT FIRST ON ASAD AND THEREAFTER, IF SYRIANS ACCEPT, BROADER

MODALITIES MIGHT BE DEVISED. NONE OF ABOVE, HOWEVER, SHOULD BE READ AS A FORMAL GOE REPLY, WHICH WE WILL GET NEXT WEEK. END SUMMARY.

A. MY PRESENTATION

1. MET WITH SADAT, MARCH 11 FOR ABOUT AN HOUR TO BROACH NON-BELLIGERENCY CONCEPT. PRIME MIN MAMDUH SALEM WAS THE ONLY OTHER PERSON PRESENT. I FOLLOWED CLOSELY THE TALKING POINTS WHICH YOU HAD APPROVED, CONTRASTING THE PROCEDURAL AND SUBSTANTIVE APPROACHES AND STRESSING THE ADVANTAGES OF THE LATTER.

2. I POINTED OUT THAT PROCEDURAL APPROACH FACES US WITH ENDLESS DEBATE ON PLO QUESTION AND NO ONE CAN BE SURE THAT, IN THE END, A FORMULA CAN BE FOUND TO RECONVENE GENEVA WITH ISRAEL AND THE ARAB PARTIES PARTICIPATING. MOREOVER, SHOULD WE SUCCEED IN RECONVENING CONFERENCE, THE WHOLE QUESTION OF SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES MUST STILL BE FACED. SOVIETS, GIVEN OUR CURRENT ELECTION YEAR, WILL HAVE MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE MISCHIEF, WHILE IMMEDIATELY HAVING TO FACE PLO ISSUE WILL MAXIMIZE ISRAELI OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD UP OPPOSITION IN THE US TO OUR ROLE. IN CONTRAST, GOING THE SUBSTANTIVE ROUTE, DESPITE ACKNOWLEDGED DIFFICULTIES, HAS THE MAJOR ADVANTAGE OF GETTING SERIOUS DISCUSSIONS STARTED THIS YEAR. EVEN QUESTION OF PALESTINIANS IS LIKELY TO BE EASIER TO DEAL WITH IN CONTEXT OF NEGOTIATIONS THAT ARE DRIVEN BY MAJOR SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE OF TERRITORY AND NON-BELLIGERENCY.

3. AFTER REMINDING SADAT OF YOUR EARLIER MESSAGE COVERING THE RABIN TALKS, I TOLD HIM THE ISRAELIS HAVE NOW AUTHORIZED US TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATING AN END TO THE STATE OF BELLIGERENCY BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT, SYRIA AND JORDAN, AS IN INTERIM STEP SHORT OF A STATE OF PEACE. LATTER WOULD HAVE TO BE NEGOTIATED AS PART OF FINAL SETTLEMENT. I RECALLED HE, FAHMY AND EVEN PRESIDENT ASAD HAD ON SECRET

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OCCASION DISCUSSED THE SUBJECT. WE HAD NOT ASKED THE ISRAELIS TO DRAW A LINE BECAUSE THEIR ORIGINAL LINES ARE ALWAYS OUTRAGEOUS. (HERE SADAT LAUGHED AND AGREED). WE HAD MADE IT CLEAR TO RABIN, HOWEVER, THAT IT WOULD HAVE TO MEAN SOME VERY SUBSTANTIVE TERRITORIAL WITHDRAWALS ON ALL THREE FRONTS. SADAT INTERRUPTED TO ASK WHAT THEIR RESPONSE HAD BEEN? I TOLD HIM THAT RABIN HAD FLATLY STATED THAT SOME OF THE

GOLAN SETTLEMENTS WOULD BE REMOVED. I POINTED OUT THAT, IN LOOKING AT LINES IN GOLAN, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT IN ANY MAJOR TERRITOTIRAL CHANGE, THE MAJORITY OF SETTLEMENTS WILL HAVE TO BE REMOVED. ON EGYPTIAN SIDE, YOU HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD RESIST GOING BEYOND AL-ARISH - RAS MUHAMMED LINE UNDER SUCH AN AGREEMENT, ALTHOUGH IT IS YOUR PERSONAL VIEW THE LINE COULD BE BENT BACK FARTHER. RE THE WEST BANK, AFTER A MAJOR CABINET FIGHT, THE ISRAELIS HAVE ALSO AGREED TO TALK ABOUT GIVING UP TERRITORY THERE. I EMPHASIZED THAT THIS IS SOMETHING THAT NO ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAS HERETOFORE AGREED TO DO IN A FORMAL WAY. I ALSO POINTED OUT THAT WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO SUPPORT TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS COMMENSURATE WITH THE MAGNITUDE OF THE POLITICAL CONCESSIONS INVOLVED AND THAT, UNDER SUCH A CONCEPT, IT WOULD CERTAINLY MEAN FOR EGYPT THE RETURN OF THE GREATER PART OF THE SINAI.

4. I THEN CITED FOR SADAT THE PARTICULAR ADVANTAGES WHICH WE BELIEVE SUCH AN APPROACH OFFERS. FIRST, IT LINKS SUBSTNATIAL WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORIES TO GRANTING NON-BELLIGERENCY AND, THROUGH THIS LINKAGE COULD ALLOW MEANINGFUL PROGRESS IN A FORESEEABLE FUTURE. SECOND, IT WOULD INVOLVE SYRIA AND MIGHT INVOLVE THE WEST BANK. WHILE THE ISRAELIS WOULD BE DELIGHTED IF IT WERE LIMITED TO EGYPT AND SYRIA, WE BELIEVE THE PROPOSAL REPRESENTS A COMMITMENT ON THEIR PART TO THE CONCEPT OF WEST BANK CONCESSIONS. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT. THIRD, WITH THE ISRAELI CABINET DECISION, THEY HAVE ACTIVATED A PROCESS THAT REQUIRES THEIR FACING UP TO MAJOR TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS ON ALL THREE FRONTS AND WHICH MAY EVEN
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FORCE THEM INTO ELECTIONS THIS YEAR. FINALLY, SINCE IT WOULD SOLVE THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEMS AND BREAK THE BACK OF THE TERRITORIAL ISSUE, THE CONCEPT IS A LOGICAL BRIDGE TO A FINAL SETTLEMENT. IT COULD AVOID THE PREVIOUS DILEMMA THAT GOING DIRECTLY TO NEGOTIATIONS ON A FINAL SETTLEMENT PLACES INTO THE HANDS OF THOSE WHO WISH TO DELAY PROGRESS. IN TELLING THIS TO SADAT, I STRESSED THAT I HAD BEEN SPECIFICALLY INSTRUCTED TO INSURE HIM THAT WE WILL STICK TO WHAT HE AND PRESIDENT FORD DISCUSSED AS TO THE ULTIMATE GOALS OF PEACE.

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

5. NOTING ONE CAN CONCEIVE OF SUCH EXPLORATIONS IN VARIOUS COMBINATIONS, I SAID THAT IF PRESIDENT SADAT CONSIDERS IT A USEFUL APPROACH, WE WOULD WELCOME HAVING HIS JUDGEMENT ON HOW TO PROCEED AND THAT WE WILL AWAIT HIS RESPONSE BEFORE MAKING A FURTHER MOVE. I EXPLAINED WE HAVE NOT YET RAISED THE SUBJECT WITH EITHER PRESIDENT ASAD OR KING HUSSEIN AND DO NOT INTEND TO DO SO UNTIL WE HAVE HIS VIEWS. IF HE DOES NOT AGREE, THERE IS NO POINT TO DEVELOPING THE PROPOSAL FURTHER WITH THE ISRAELIS. INSTEAD, WE WOULD HAVE TO LOOK FOR SOME PROCEDURAL ROUTE TO RECONVENE GENEVA WITH ALL OF THE DIFFICULTIES SUCH AN APPROACH POSES.

B. SADAT'S REACTION

6. THROUGHOUT MY PRESENTATION SADAT LISTENED ATTENTIVELY. WHEN I HAD FINISHED, HE SAID HE RECOGNIZED THAT OUR SUGGESTION REPRESENTS A SINCERE EFFORT TO GET SOMETHING UNDERWAY IN 1976 AND WAS DEEPLY GRATEFUL FOR OUR CONTINUING INTEREST. HE COULD NOT NOW GIVE ME A FORMAL REPLY, SINCE HE WOULD WISH TO THINK ABOUT THE IDEA FURTHER AND TO CONSULT WITH HIS PRINCIPAL COLLEAGUES -- VP MOBAREK,
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PRIMIN SALEM, FAHMY, GAMSU AND PERHAPS PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY SPEAKER MAREI. THEREAFTER, PROBABLY EARLY NEXT WEEK, AFTER HIS MAJOR ADDRESS TO THE NATION ON SUNDAY, HE WOULD GIVE ME HIS ANSWER THROUGH FAHMY. SINCE FAHMY WAS NOT PRESENT AT OUR MEETING, HE ASKED THAT I BRIEF HIM RIGHT AWAY. (MY MEETING WITH FAHMY IS REPORTED BY SEPTTEL.) SINCE I AM ALWAYS A BIT UNEASY THAT THE PRESIDENT DOES NOT GET ALL OF THE DETAILS, I ASKED HIM IF THERE WERE ANY POINTS ON WHICH HE WOULD LIKE CLARIFICATION OR WOULD LIKE ME TO REPEAT. OUR OVERRIDING PURPOSE, I AGAIN STRESSED, WAS TO GET SOMETHING MOVING IN 1976, WHICH, IN RESPONSE TO HIS REQUEST, WE HAD TOLD HIM WE WOULD TRY TO DO. I AGAIN HIGHLIGHTED THE ADVANTAGES OFFERED BY SUCH AN APPROACH. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD WHAT IS INVOLVED, BUT AGAIN ASKED THAT I BRIEF FAHMY.

7. ALTHOUGH THE PRESIDENT ASKED THAT I NOT REPORT ANYTHING YET, I THINK YOU SHOULD KNOW SOME OF HIS PRELIMINARY MUSINGS. NONE OF THESE REPRESENT FINAL ANSWER, BUT THEY MAY OFFER SOME CLUES AS TO THE DRIFT OF HIS THINKING. FIRST, HE NOTED THAT THE NON-BELLIGERENCY IDEA HAS BEEN LEAKED BY THE ISRAELIES AND HAD APPEARED "ABOUT A WEEK OR TWO AGO IN THE PRESS. (IT APPEARED EVEN EARLIER) HAD I SEEN THE MOST RECENT SYRIAN ATTACK ON IT, CHARGING THAT IS A PLOT CONCOCTED BY THE US AND SADAT TO UNDERMINE ARAB RIGHTS? IF THE ISRAELIS ARE SERIOUS, WHY COULD THEY NOT HAVE KEPT THEIR PROPOSAL QUIET. I TOLD HIM WE, TOO, REGRETTED THE PUBLICITY WHICH THE ISRAELIS HAVE GIVEN THE PROPOSAL, BUT URGED THAT HE STILL WEIGHT THE CONCEPT CAREFULLY. HE SAID HE WILL, OF COURSE, DO SO.

8. AT ANOTHER POINT, HE NOTED THAT THE "PRICE IS HIGH" FOR SOMETHING SHORT OF TOTAL WITHDRAWAL AND REITERATED THE POINT HE SO OFTEN MADE DURING THE ASWAN TALKS THAT GRANTING NON-BELLIGERNECY FOR LESS THAN TOTAL WITHDRAWAL WOULD IN EFFECT BE INVITING THE ISRAELIS TO CONTINUE THEIR OCCUPATION OF SOME ARAB TERRITORY. I POINTED OUT THAT THIS NEED NOT BE THE INTERPRETATION TO BE PLACED ON USCH A DEAL, WHICH,
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AS I HAD EARLIER EMPHASIZED, WAS CONCEIVED AS AN INTERIM STEP TOWARD AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THIS WAS SO, SADAT RECALLED THAT HE HAD PREVIOUSLY SPOKEN PRIVATELY AND PUBLICLY ABOUT NOT NEGOTIATING NON-BELLIGERENCY UNTIL THE LAST

20 KMS OF OCCUPIED TERRITORY ARE BEING DISCUSSED. THE AL-ARISH - RAS MUHAMMED LINE IS STILL A LONG WAY FROM THE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY, CERTAINLY MUCH MORE THAN 20 KMS. IN THIS CONNECTION, ALREADY THE ISRAELIS ARE BUILDING A PERMANENT SETTLEMENT AT WHAT THEY CALL YAMIT, WHICH IS THE EGYPTIAN HALF OF RAFAH ON THE GAZA BORDER. HE COULD NEVER ACCEPT PERMANENT ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF EGYPTIAN RAFAH.

9. AT STILL ANOTHER POINT, HE OBSERVED THERE IS NOTHING IN THE CONCEPT THAT WOULD BRING THE PLO INTO IT. THIS POSES A SERIOUS PROBLEM. HE RECALLED THAT HE HAD EARLIER WANTED HUSSEIN TO NEGOTIATE FOR THE PALESTINIANS, BUT HUSSEIN'S PRESENTATION AT THE RABAT CONFERENCE ABOUT WHAT HAD BEEN OFFERED HIM HAD PROMPTED AN ARAB SUMMIT DECISION THAT THE PLO WOULD HENCEFORTH BE THE SOLE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIANS. THIS DECISION CANNOT BE LIGHTLY IGNORED. MOREOVER, AS WE KNEW, HE HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN AN EFFORT TO SPLIT THE PLO FROM THE SYRIANS AND IS HAVING SOME SUCCESS. THINKING OUT LOUD, HE WONDERED IF THERE IS NOT SOME WAY OF GETTING THE PLO INTO SUCH AN APPROACH. I TOLD HIM WE HAD GIVEN MUCH THOUGHT TO THIS, BUT WE MUST LIVE WITH THE FACT THAT THE ISRAELIS REMAIN ADAMANTLY OPPOSED TO THE PLO AND THAT THE LATTER HAS DONE NOTHING TO MAKE THINGS EASIER. HE ALSO WONDERED WHETHER FORCING AN ISRAELI ELECTION IN 1976 MAY NOT BRING INTO OFFICE AN EVEN MORE INTRANSIGENT GOVERNMENT THAN THAT OF RABIN.

10. DESPITE THESE RESERVATIONS, SADAT REPEATEDLY STRESSED THAT HIS POSITION HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO LOOK SERIOUSLY AT ANY OPPORTUNITY TO GET BACK "ANY INCH" OF TERRITORY AND THAT HE HAS FREQUENTLY URGED ARAFAT AND HIS ARAB COLLEAGUES TO DO THE SAME. HE THOUGHT OUR ACHIEVEMENT IN BEING ABLE TO PERSUADE

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THE ISRAELI CABINET EVEN TO AGREE TO TALKS ON THE WEST BANK IS SIGNIFICANT AND REPEATEDLY HAILED IT WITH THE TERM "BRAVO". HE MUSED, HOWEVER, THAT IT MIGHT BE BETTER FIRST TO TRY OUT THIS ADEA ON ASAD AND ASCERTAIN THE SYRIAN REACTION. IF ASAD REACTED POSITIVELY, THEN ONE COULD EXPLORE BROADER MODALITIES. IN ANY EVENT, HE UNDERTOOK TO STUDY THE CONCEPT CAREFULLY AND TO LET US KNOW HIS REACTION EARLY NEXT WEEK.

11. NOTE: THE PRESIDENT WAS CLEARLY VERY PREOCCUPIED WITH HIS UPCOMING SPEECH AND ITS LIKELY

REPERCUSSIONS AND HAD BEEN DISCUSSING WITH PRIMIN
SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS.
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